

CONTAINER OF CIGARETTESTECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a container of cigarettes.

More specifically, the present invention relates to a container of cigarettes comprising an outer package and a number of packets of cigarettes arranged in a given order inside said outer package.

BACKGROUND ART

Known containers of cigarettes of the above type, normally referred to as "cartons", comprise a number of packets, each of which is used individually and therefore structured to withstand for a given length of time the stress to which a packet of cigarettes is subjected in use, and to preserve, for a relatively long time prior to use, the original characteristics of the cigarettes in the packet, regardless of external environmental conditions.

This is normally achieved by providing each packet of cigarettes with a package comprising an inner foil wrapping, a rigid or soft outer wrapping designed to

withstand mechanical stress during use, and a transparent outer overwrapping for sealing the packet until it is opened.

Such a packet is obviously relatively expensive, particularly in view of the fact that the outer wrapping, which is normally the most expensive part of the packet after the cigarettes, cannot be reused.

US5301805 discloses a limited-life reusable hard pack for encasing a soft pack of cigarettes; the reusable hard pack permits easy access to the cigarettes by the feature of a slideable interior wall attached to a pivotable bottom wall which when moved relative to the exterior walls of the hard pack pushes the soft pack upward and beyond the top of the hard pack. An overhang on a top wall extends across and beyond one side wall to prevent the bottom wall from pivoting downward, beyond the bottom plane of the hard pack. The opposite side of the top wall leaves a gap through which cigarettes may be removed without opening the top closure; a tuck portion is pivotably attached to the top wall. When the pack is closed, the tuck portion lies inside and against the front wall of the pack. One such hard pack is collapsed and inserted into a standard ten-pack carton; in particular one of these reusable packs may be inserted into a standard ten-pack carton along with ten standard soft packs or foil packs, the consumer inserts a foil or soft pack into the reusable pack, then discards the inner foil or soft pack when finished, retaining the reusable

pack for a fresh foil or soft pack and the consumer may then discard the reusable case after the last soft pack has been smoked.

US5669493 discloses a bundle pack, or carton, for cigarette packs that is made of thin cardboard and is provided with perforations and/or die-cut lines that allow separation of an end portion of the carton; the tabs that can be separated end portion of the carton having folded to form a smaller reusable box adapted to contain and protect at least one standard pack of cigarettes.

Both US5301805 and US5669493 disclose a carton for cigarette packs having an outer package housing a number of soft packets of cigarettes and a flat blank for making a rigid reusable box; the consumer has to make the rigid reusable box starting from the blank. However, the quality of the rigid reusable box is relatively not very good due to the fact that the rigid reusable box has to be made by the consumer using the flat blank; furthermore, the user could have some problems in making the rigid reusable box using the flat blank.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to at least partly eliminate the aforementioned drawbacks by enabling manufacturers to dispense with high-cost packaging while still providing the consumer with packets of the same appearance and mechanical strength, and which are equally easy to use.

According to the present invention, there is provided a container of cigarettes comprising an outer package, a number of packets of cigarettes arranged in a given order inside the outer package and at least one reusable box housed inside the outer package; the container being characterized by the fact that the reusable box is arranged side by side with the packets, is arranged with the packets in said given order, and contains one of the packets; each one of the other packets acting as a refill for the reusable box.

Since the necessary mechanical strength during use is provided entirely by the reusable box, into which each packet is inserted when used, the package of each packet can be greatly simplified and preferably limited to the airtight overwrapping alone.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A non-limiting embodiment of the present invention will be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows a view in perspective, with parts removed for clarity, of a preferred embodiment of the container according to the present invention;

Figure 2 shows a larger-scale view in perspective of a first detail in Figure 1;

Figure 3 shows a larger-scale view in perspective of a second detail in Figure 1;

Figure 4 shows a view in perspective of how the Figure 2 and 3 details are used.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Number 1 in Figure 1 indicates as a whole a container of cigarettes, hereinafter referred to as a "carton", comprising an outer package 2, a number of packets 3 of cigarettes housed inside outer package 2, and at least one reusable box 4 housed inside outer package 2 side by side with packets 3 and arranged with packets 3 in a given order.

As shown more clearly in Figure 4, box 4 is a closed box comprising a lid 5, which can be opened for access to an opening 6 shaped and sized to allow the passage of a packet 3, and the inner shape of box 4 and the outer shape of each packet 3 are substantially complementary, so that a packet 3 can be inserted completely and closed inside box 4, and so that each packet 3 acts as a refill for box 4.

In the example shown in the accompanying drawings, carton 1 is a conventional carton in the form of an elongated rectangular parallelepiped, box 4 is a hinged-lid box in the form of a rectangular parallelepiped, and each packet 3 has an outer package 7 also in the form of a rectangular parallelepiped.

In connection with the above, it should be pointed out that a number of packets 3 and at least one box 4 - which may either be empty or originally contain a packet 3, but which in any case can be refilled with packets 3 - can be combined regardless of the shape of outer package 2, which may be any shape; of the type of package 2,

which may be any type; of the order in which packets 3 and box 4 are arranged inside outer package 2, which may be any order compatible with the shape and size of outer package 2; of the shape of box 4 and packets 3; of the type of box 4, which, in the example shown, as stated, is a hinged-lid type; and of the type of packets 3.

For it to be reused, box 4 is preferably made of relatively strong material, such as cardboard, plastic, or sheet metal. Whichever the case, box 4 is made of printable material, so that its outer surface can act as a support for graphics, indicated as a whole by 8, comprising images 8a and/or messages 8b.

To make packets 3 as environment-friendly and cheap as possible, outer package 7 of each packet 3 is preferably defined solely by an airtight outer wrapping 9 opened by means of a tear-off strip 10.

Outer wrapping 9, which may be transparent or opaque, is also made of printable material, so that its outer surface can act as a support for graphics, indicated as a whole by 11, comprising images 11a and/or messages 11b and not necessarily the same as graphics 8.

If outer package 7 also comprises an inner wrapping on which graphics 11 are printed, outer wrapping 9 is made of transparent material so that graphics 11 are visible from the outside.

According to a further embodiment (not shown in the attached drawings), inside the carton 1 there is provided a sheet of paper or carton, which has the function of

compensating the dimension of the box 4 in order to give uniform dimensions to the group of packets 3 inside the carton 1. The sheet of paper or carton may be printed and/or folded and can have the function of a coupon.

In actual use, once outer package 2 is opened, the user removes box 4 and, once the packet 3 possibly contained originally in box 4 is opened and used up, refills box 4 with packets 3 one after the other until carton 1 is emptied.